

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOU, ENRG, ELAB, CZ
SUBJECT: CALL ON MAYOR OF PRAGUE

1. SUMMARY: I CALLED DECEMBER 20 ON MAYOR OF PRAGUE, ZDENEK ZUSKA. MAYOR ACKNOWLEDGED PROBLEMS OF ENERGY AND SHORT SUPPLY OF LABOR IN CZECHOSLOVAK CAPITAL CITY. AFTERWARDS I LAID WREATH AT TOMB OF UNKNOWN SOLDIER. END SUMMARY.

2. ENERGY: DODGING MY QUESTION ABOUT HIGHER PRICES THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA MAY HAVE TO PAY FOR SOVIET OIL IMPORTS, ZUSKA NONETHELESS CONFIRMED THAT CEMA COUNTRIES WOULD "HAVE TO REACT" TO THE NEW HIGHER PRICE OF OIL ON THE WORLD MARKET. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CITY OF PRAGUE HAS CUT STREET ILLUMINATION BY HALF AND HAS REDUCED HEAT IN SIXTY PERCENT OF DWELLINGS UNDER DIRECT CITY CONTROL. PRAGUE CURRENTLY MAINTAINS A THIRTY-DAY RESERVE OF COAL, ZUSKA ADDED.

3. LABOR FORCE: PRAGUE'S MAIN PROBLEM, ACCORDING TO HER MAYOR, IS A SHORTAGE OF WORKERS AGGRAVATED BY 300,000 PENSIONERS. TOTAL WORK FORCE OF 660,000 INCLUDES SOME 60,000 RETIRED PERSONS WORKING PARTTIME--"THANK GOD" ZUSKA SAID. HE NOTED PARTICULARLY
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THE SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY IN THE LOWER GRADES AND PRESCHOOL. AN INCREASE IN NUMBER OF NURSERIES COULD IMPROVE THE SITUATION BY FREEING QUALIFIED WOMEN TO FIND EMPLOYMENT. IN THE MEANTIME, FOREIGN WORKERS FROM SWEDEN, POLAND, YUGOSLAVIA AND ROMANIA HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY THROUGH THEIR RESPECTIVE FIRMS. ZUSKA TRIED TO BAIT ME BY

MENTIONING UNEMPLOYMENT AND SURPLUS OF PUERTO RICAN WORKERS IN NEW YORK CITY, BUT WHEN I EXPLAINED NEW YORK'S INTERCONNECTED PROBLEMS FROM MAYOR BEAM'S POINT OF VIEW--ANNUALLY A LARGE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS, INCLUDING SOME ILLEGAL, WELFARE PAYMENTS FOR FAMILY HEADS AVERAGING MORE THAN EIGHT THOUSAND DOLLARS PER YEAR (FAR MORE THAN AN AVERAGE WORKER'S INCOME IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA) AND A DWINDLING TAX BASE--ZUSKA DROPPED THE SUBJECT.

4. WREATH-LYAIN: AFTER CALL, I LAID WREATH ON TOMB OF UNKNOWN SOLDIER, REMARKING THAT U.S. AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOUGHT FOR SAME CUASE IN WORLD WAR II AND THAT I HOPED WE WOULD WORK TOGETHER IN THE FUTURE.

5. MAYOR ZUSKA SPOKE WITH THE CONFIDENCE OF A MAN WHO IS SURE OF HIS FACTS AND SECURE IN HIS POSITION. INTELLIGENT, ATTENTIVE AND APPARENTLY KEEN TO TAKE THE MEASURE OF A GUEST, HE TRIED MORE THAN ONCE TO MAKE SUBTLY UNFAVORABLE COMPARISONS BETWEEN PRAGUE AND NEW YORK AND BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT CONDITIONS PREVAILING IN THE U.S. AND CSSR. ALTHOUGH CLEARLY INFORMED OF THE CURRENT PARTY LINE AND IN AGREEMENT WITH IT, ZUSKA APPEARS TO HAVE CARVED OUT ENOUGH AUTHORITY TO SPEAK AND ACT WITH SOME INDEPENDENCE. AT THE END OF OUR MEETING THE MAYOR, PICKING UP ON MY SUGGESTION THAT I CALL ON PRAGUE'S CHIEF ARCHITECT FOR TOUR OF THE CITY'S NEW BUILDING PROJECTS, VOLUNTEERED THE SERVICES OF HIS OFFICE TO ARRANGE THE VISIT WHICH I INTEND TO DO EARLY IN 1977.
BYRNE

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